



Anglican Diocese of Gippsland

A Guide to Synod 2022



Contents

What is Synod?.....	3
Who are the members of Synod?	4
The Bishop	4
The House of Clergy	4
The House of Laity	4
Why become a lay member of Synod?	5
What is the business of Synod?	6
Legislation.....	6
Resolutions	7
Elections.....	7
Questions	8
Other Synod activities	8
The Presidential Address.....	8
Standing Orders	9
Participating in Synod	9
In debate	9
Synod courtesies.....	10
Microphones.....	10
Presenting legislation to Synod.....	11
1 Introduction and general debate	11
2 Committee stage.....	11
3 Passing of the bill.....	22
4 Assent.....	22
Proposing Synod motions	22

What is Synod?

Synod is the gathering of the clergy and lay representatives of the Diocese with the Bishop to make decisions about our corporate life in Christ. We begin each Synod session by coming together as the Body of Christ in a celebration of the Eucharist; the business meetings which follow are an extension of the Eucharistic gathering.

Synod governs our corporate life as Anglicans in Gippsland, and our relationships within the Anglican Church generally, and at times with wider society, in many ways. Synod members elect most members of Bishop in Council and representatives on wider church bodies. They also make decisions in many important areas, such as:

- Parish governance and all that that entails
- Promoting, enabling and resourcing our mission
- Monitoring and reviewing diocesan finances and budgets.
- Encouraging and sometimes implementing change in areas such as ecumenical relationships

Synod also comments on issues and concerns in Australian society, such as care of the environment, marriage and family life, education, and refugees.

Sometimes described as the Church's 'parliament', Synod conducts its business on a model based on the Westminster parliamentary system, similar to that followed by Australia's federal and state parliaments. As with parliaments, each Synod member is elected for a term, usually of three years. (Each Synod consists of 3 sessions, one session (or meeting) is held each year.)

Meetings must be held annually, and generally they are held over a three day (Friday evening Eucharist to Sunday) session in May each year. Occasionally additional meetings are called for specific purposes.

Who are the members of Synod?

As with parliaments, Synods are in effect divided into 'houses' - the house of clergy and the house of laity - which meet with the Bishop.

The Bishop

The Bishop is a member of Synod and presides over or chairs its meetings.

The House of Clergy

Everyone in the diocese who is ordained and holds a full license from the Bishop, such as incumbents, priests-in-charge, assistant priests, Deacons and chaplains are members of Synod.

Clergy who have the Archbishop's 'permission to officiate' or PTO (such as retired clergy) are not licensed and therefore not members of Synod, however are often invited to attend and given permission to speak.

The House of Laity

Laity are members of Synod in a number of categories. The majority are elected representatives of their parishes, with most parishes entitled to elect three representatives and three supplementary representatives. Alternate representatives are also elected, to take the place of an elected member if a member is unable to be present for a full Synod meeting.

The Chancellor and the Registrar are also members of Synod by virtue of holding their offices.

Lay members, including alternates, are elected at the beginning of each term and hold office for the entire term (usually three years) unless they resign. To be eligible, they

must be electors within a parish, residents of the Diocese of Gippsland, and be communicant members of the Anglican Church of Australia. Elections are held in parishes and other bodies (at the annual general meeting of parishes and other bodies) when the Bishop issues a Mandate, a formal document authorising the holding of elections for Synod membership. The Bishop also issues a Mandate to summon Synod to meet.

While Synod members are always free to discuss matters coming before Synod with their congregations and Parish Councils, they should remember that they are not delegates from their parishes. Their parishes cannot direct them in how they should vote on any matter.

Why become a lay member of Synod?

Synod plays a crucial role in the life of the Church and especially how it is governed. Members of Synod, then, have a significant responsibility to their parish and to the Diocese, a responsibility that should be taken seriously. People interested in representing their parish at Synod should be available, and prepared, to attend each entire annual session of Synod for the duration of their elected term.

The membership of Synod should also reflect the membership of the whole Diocese. People within the Diocese with as many different experiences of life as possible, who feel they can contribute to the Church in this way, should consider representing their parish at Synod.

Potential members do not need to have special legal or other expertise, or even to be confident as a public speaker. The most important attributes are willingness to attend Synod faithfully, to read all the Synod papers carefully, to listen attentively, and to vote responsibly in

all the decisions that come before the Synod.

Only Synod members can participate in Synod debate, and vote in Synod elections. Other interested people (including press representatives) are welcome to attend and observe Synod. Occasionally visitors are invited to address Synod on a specific topic.

What is the business of Synod?

The main business of Synod is the governance of the Diocese. This is achieved through **legislation** and **resolutions**, as with Parliamentary governance, and through **elections** to key diocesan, Provincial and national bodies. Synod also provides an opportunity for members to ask **questions** of fact, principally of the Bishop, but also of any other member.

Legislation

Legislation is a record of what Synod has agreed to in matters of church governance. Diocesan legislation is binding, in that clergy, lay office holders, such as churchwardens, members of parish council and incumbency committee members, and all members of the Church resident in the Diocese are required to act in accordance with its directives on matters concerning ministry, church membership and church property. It is especially important that clergy know and contribute to what is in the legislation since they swear to uphold the acts of Synod when they are ordained and again when they are inducted into parish appointments.

The key Acts of Synod can be found on the diocesan website: www.gippsanglican.org.au/resources

Synod legislation usually comes from two sources:

1. Certain canons passed by General Synod that need to be adopted by the Diocese by means of Diocesan legislation before they take effect in the Diocese and the national church; and

2. Draft legislation promoted by Bishop-in- Council.

An example of the first is the canon providing for Safe Ministry for Children, which was adopted by Gippsland Synod in 2017 following its passing by General Synod that year. An example of the second is the 2004 Parish Administration Act, brought to Synod by Bishop in Council.

Synod can ask Bishop-in-Council to prepare legislation in a particular area for consideration at a future session. Individual Synod members can bring draft legislation privately, though this is both unusual and generally not advisable unless they believe their proposal is likely to attract a high degree of support.

Resolutions

While not binding, resolutions are influential statements that recommend certain courses of action or offer comment on matters of concern. Most are directed internally to parishes, the Bishop or Bishop-in-Council. Others deal with matters of concern in the wider Church and community. They are an important means by which the Anglican Church can make its views known in a considered and representative way. The resolutions of Synod are recorded in the Synod synopsis on the diocesan website.

Elections

Synod members elect people to a number of diocesan committees, as well as those who will represent the Diocese on wider Anglican bodies. Diocesan committees elected by Synod, either fully or in part, include Bishop in Council, the Trusts Corporation, the Diocesan Stipends Committee, and the Board of Nominators (the body responsible for preparing a list of candidates for the election of a Bishop by Synod members). Synod also elects Gippsland's representatives on the Provincial Council (which also includes representatives of the other four dioceses in Victoria) and the national General Synod of the Anglican Church of Australia. These elections are mostly

held at the first session of a new Synod, with nominations called for in the Bishop's Mandate summoning Synod to meet.

Questions

At the beginning of each meeting of a session, the agenda provides opportunity for members to ask questions. These are directed to the President or to another member of Synod relating to a Bill or other business in which that member is concerned, and must be confined to matters of fact, not opinion. Answers to the questions are usually given publicly at the commencement of the next sitting day, unless the matter is complex and requires more research. In this case, the answer may be provided to Synod members in writing at a later date.

Other Synod activities

Synod also provides a forum where those attending can hear about Diocesan activities, such as the Church's response to severe bushfires or floods, or through information presentations. Other presentations might highlight the work of mission and welfare agencies or diocesan committees. Synod must first give leave for presentations to be made.

The Presidential Address

Synod sessions commence with the Synod Eucharist on Friday evening. Following the Eucharist, the Bishop delivers the Presidential Address, sometimes called the 'charge', to Synod. In this address, the Bishop customarily offers a perspective on matters confronting the Diocese, the wider Church, and the community, often outlining plans and directions, and perhaps a view on

matters coming before the Synod meeting.

Standing Orders

Synod is conducted in accordance with the practice set out in the Standing Orders available on the Diocesan website.

Participating in Synod

Synod can be daunting at first because of its formal style and detailed rules of participation. It is advisable for members who wish to take a more active role, by speaking in debates (see below) and proposing motions to understand the key elements of the Standing Orders.

In debate

When addressing Synod for any reason, whether in moving or seconding a motion, asking a question or speaking in debate, Synod members are expected to address, principally, the Bishop who is addressed as "Mr President". Members should state their name and the legal basis for their right to address the Synod. This will usually be their name and their parish. So the formula is for members to commence speaking by saying: "Mr President, name, parish" (eg "Mr President, Jo Smith, St Sleepy Hollows, Mallaralgon").

Synod is a formal assembly, governed by carefully developed, precise rules of participation. It deals with weighty matters concerning the Church and community. Synod members are expected to speak and behave in a manner that reflects the seriousness of the meeting, and in a manner befitting a Christian assembly. This is not to say that there cannot be moments of humour and even good fun! But members must not speak derogatively of other Synod members or of anyone else in the course of a Synod speech. They are generally assured of a better hearing from other Synod members if they have a

positive and respectful contribution to make.

It is also unacceptable for Synod members to hiss speakers, or 'cat call', or interrupt a speaker (except to ask the President to rule on a point of order), or behave in any other way which could be interpreted as partisan. The Standing Orders are strict about inappropriate speech and behaviour.

Sometimes a motion is brought forward which Synod members find difficult either to adopt or reject. For example, a motion may call for adoption of a doctrinal or moral stance where bona fide differences of opinion exist within the confessional boundaries of our Church, and the Church as a whole still has an open mind, or where assumptions are asserted as a premise for action without adequate evidence. A procedural method of dealing with such a motion is by moving a motion that the Synod not consider this matter further. (Such a motion may however itself be superseded by a successful motion to adjourn the house.)

Synod courtesies

Synod members stand when the Bishop enters or leaves the Synod venue.

Microphones

The member should first stand in order to gain the President's attention and then move to the nearest microphone. Members should not stand at a microphone when there is no present reason to do so (for example, there is nothing currently before the meeting to which members may speak).

Presenting legislation to Synod

The process for presenting legislation to Synod is quite formal. Proposed legislation will invariably be contained in the papers circulated before the meeting. In each case there will be a "Bill" which is the text proposed for the eventual Act, and an explanatory memorandum which provides background explanation but is not part of the formal Bill.

Consideration by the Synod happens in four separate stages:

1 Introduction and general debate

The mover and seconder of the bill seek to "bring in" the bill, that is, to have it considered by the Synod at all. They explain the purpose of the legislation and how it works. Synod members then debate the general principles of the legislation, before the Synod votes on the motion. A simple majority vote is required for the bill to move to the next stage. If that motion is carried the Standing Orders allow for a choice of procedure. If notice has been given of any amendments, or if the debate suggests that there may be a wish for individual provisions to be debated, then the bill will be considered in committee. If there is no evidence of a wish for such detailed consideration, the mover may seek leave to proceed straight to the passing of the bill.

2 Committee stage

The Synod now becomes a 'committee of the whole house', which discusses the detail of the bill. This stage is chaired by the 'chair of committees' or a deputy chair, who are officers elected by Synod at the beginning of each

Synod term. This is the time when any amendments are suggested and, after discussion, decided on by a vote. Proposals in committee do not require a seconder. At the end of this stage, a certified copy of the draft legislation incorporating any agreed amendments is produced.

3 Passing of the bill

This stage is a formal process which happens once the certified copy of the legislation is available. If there have been a number of amendments, this might not be until a subsequent sitting day in the Synod session. The vote at this stage is 'by houses', that is, the clergy vote is taken separately from the vote of the laity. If the bill is not passed (by a simple majority) in each house (clergy and laity) the bill fails. This is an important form of protection, ensuring that legislation is acceptable to both clergy and laity.

4 Assent

The bill does not become church law until the Bishop assents to it.

Proposing Synod motions

Any member of Synod can propose a motion ahead of time for debate at Synod; each motion must be seconded by another member of Synod and it will not be included on the notice paper unless it is.

Motions can also be submitted on the first meeting day of each Synod session, and after that only if Synod agrees by a majority vote. Unless Synod decides that any of these later motions are urgent, they are normally placed on the agenda to follow those submitted by the pre-Synod deadline. There is a risk that later items will not be dealt

with before the session concludes.

Both the mover and seconder of a motion have the right to speak to it when it comes before the Synod. All speakers have a time limit of five minutes, with a possible extension of a further three minutes. These time limits are enforced unless Synod agrees to a brief extension of time.

Motions can be amended from the floor of Synod, if those proposing an *amendment* convince a majority of Synod members to agree with their proposed change. All amendments, both to motions and in *the committee stage* of legislation, need to be written out clearly with 3 copies and handed to the Synod secretaries to ensure accuracy.

Motions are voted on by the whole Synod, not by separate houses.

In the course of the meeting there are opportunities for the President to ask whether any of the resolutions are 'formal', that is, can be agreed to without debate. If a resolution is formal the mover may speak to it for three minutes before it is formally agreed to. (It is wise for the mover not to say anything that might cause members to revisit their decision to allow it to pass.) If a member objects to a motion being considered formal they can be asked by the President for the reasons for their objection.

If you have any further questions regarding Synod, please contact the Registrar, as Synod Secretary by email at: richardc@gippslandanglicans.org.au